

Policy/Strategic Goal:

- To explore the possible benefits to the community by use of closed circuit television cameras in public places for the purpose of crime prevention.
- To employ best practices with funding resources available.

Problems/Challenges/Opportunities:

- Are video surveillance systems efficient at reducing crime or the fear of crime?
- Are video surveillance systems cost effective?
- Do video surveillance systems discriminate?
- Are traffic cameras effective at crash reduction?

Best Practices:

- Reduction of crime in the community
- Reduction of the fear of crime in the community
- Create an environment of safety in the community.
- Be fiscally responsible with available funding for crime prevention

Evaluation:

- Studies nationwide and internationally have shown that CCTV does not clearly have a positive effect on the reduction of crime or the fear of crime.
- Studies have shown that traffic cameras clearly have a positive effect on the reduction of traffic crashes in specifically targeted intersections.

Pros:

- CCTV provides a video recording for possible identification at a later time
- CCTV may aid police investigations
- CCTV provides for possible medical assistance if needed
- CCTV may provide for a small reduction of the fear of crime perception if awareness is very high
- CCTV studies have shown a small amount of effectiveness against property crime in specific locations.
- CCTV is more effective with *place management* in small contained areas
- Traffic camera studies have shown a positive cause and effect when used in targeted traffic crash areas
- Traffic cameras will not cost the City of Asheville and funding

Cons:

- CCTV is highly situational
- CCTV must have and maintain a high level of community awareness to have any effect. Studies have shown that there is a low level of awareness when used
- CCTV studies have shown that drug markets can continue to operate in the presence of the cameras by small alterations of practices
- CCTV Images are not always useful if people block the views of criminal activity
- CCTV creates a perception of civil liberties violations
- CCTV creates displacement

- CCTV installation often increases or creates fear of crime implying that the area under surveillance is dangerous. (Would tourists fear coming to Pack Square if they knew it was being watched?)
- CCTV studies have shown that there is no measurable effect on personal crime and public order offenses
- CCTV is very expensive.
- CCTV creates personnel costs since the cameras must be monitored

Recommendations:

- When asked in a survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice Problem Oriented Policing Institute, respondents would rather have more officers on patrol and brighter lighting rather than CCTV. Studies do not show that CCTV clearly has a positive impact on crime prevention, and since systems are very expensive perhaps a better expenditure of crime prevention funding could be used elsewhere.
- Traffic cameras on the other hand have proved to be very effective when used to target specific high impact areas when based on statistical data. Traffic cameras incur no cost to the City of Asheville.